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ABSTRACT

This program, leading to specialization in reading on the undergraduate level, has been developed by the Division of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Northern Iowa. The B.A. program in Elementary Education: Remedial Reading is characterized by early and continuous involvement with children in classrooms and clinical settings, an emphasis on the development of total language competency in the child, close supervision of students' work with children, and attention to the progress of individual students in relation to program objectives. The course work in this program is planned so that the student moves from a knowledge of the reading process and school reading programs to management and decision-making skills, first on a one-to-one basis, then in a small group, and finally in the classroom setting. The Reading Division includes five full-time faculty members representing expertise, publication, and service in the field of reading. In addition, two professional reading clinicians and graduate assistants serve in the Reading Center. (Author/BD)

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An Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program in Reading

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An Entry In the
1976 AACTE Distinguished Achievement
Awards Program

Division of Reading
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SUMMARY STATEMENT

An Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program in Reading

The Division of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Northern Iowa has developed a program leading to specialization in reading on the undergraduate level.

The B.A. program in Elementary Education: Remedial Reading is characterized by early and continuous involvement with children in classrooms and clinical settings, an emphasis on the development of total language competency in the child, close supervision of students' work with children, and attention to the progress of individual students in relation to program objectives.

Undergraduate specialization such as this program offers is rare in elementary teacher preparation, yet graduates of the program are in great demand, ensuring virtually 100 percent placement of students completing this program. Student interest in the program has increased rapidly. There are currently 160 students or approximately 15 percent of all students in Elementary Education at UNI who have selected the major in Remedial Reading.

The course work in this program is planned so that the student moves from a knowledge of the reading process and school reading programs to management and decision-making skills, first on a one-to-one basis, then in a small group, and finally in the classroom setting.

The Reading Division includes five full-time faculty members representing expertise, publication, and service in the field of reading. In addition, two professional reading clinicians and graduate assistants serve in the Reading Center.

A grant through the Right to Read teacher preparation program is currently being used to refine the program.

Evaluation of the program reveals satisfaction from school administrators, language arts specialists, and the students themselves. The Reading Division believes this program to be highly successful in demonstrating the ability to develop specialization in teaching on the undergraduate level.

AN UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM IN READING

Several programs in the preparation of reading teachers have been developed by the Division of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Northern Iowa. The six programs on the undergraduate and graduate level are: B.A. Elementary Education: Remedial Reading; B.A. Elementary Education: Reading and Language Arts; M.A. Remedial Reading; M.A. Elementary Reading and Language Arts; M.A. Secondary Reading; and Ed.S. Reading Clinician. On the basis of course work in these programs, students may qualify for the following certificates: Certificat approval in Elementary Reading; Certificate approval in Secondary Reading, Certificate endorsement as a Reading Clinician, Certificate endorsement as a Reading Specialist. Also the program leading to certification as a learning disabilities teacher in Iowa includes 11 hours of course work in reading.

The Division is proud of all these programs, but the most unusual and exemplary program is the undergraduate specialization in remedial reading. Opportunity for students to gain specialized teaching certification in addition to regular elementary certification is rare in undergraduate teacher preparation programs. Yet, to meet the demands for capable classroom and special teachers, this major was developed with care that certain convictions shared by the staff concerning the nature of children and reading characterize the program:

> The reading staff fully appreciates the wide range of media through which communication may occur, and supports the development of "literacy" in all modes of communication. Nevertheless, the reading staff is also aware of the relatively low level of functional reading for pleasure, personal development, and civic responsibility actually carried out by a large segment of our population despite adequate ability in basic skills.
>
> It is the belief of the UNI reading staff that increased functional use of reading may best be developed through a concern for the entire program of language development offered to a child. Therefore, a key concept in the instructional program is that reading develops out of a total language competency

of the child, and is not solely the product of practicing an isolated set of discrete reading skills.

The staff also believes that teachers should gain competencies in helping children build an appreciation of the heritage of literature, help them develop skills in critical and responsible reception and expression of language, and to help them discover the delight of expressing or experiencing creative language.

In the area of methodology, teachers should gain skill in providing an environment which creates the child's desire to overflow into language expression, and that creates a curiosity to know--to listen and to read. They should learn to provide the real context for the development of functional reading skills--the actual use of reading for personal reasons.

It is also important for the students to discover that language development is a major vehicle for the intellectual, social and emotional development of the child. Appropriate reading experiences, as one aspect of language development, can make significant contributions to the child's total development.

To help students develop adequate expertise on the undergraduate level requires early and continuous involvement with children, classrooms, and practicing teachers; realistic challenges in the college classroom through simulation and video tape experiences; and identification of each student's development in specific teaching competencies.

These beliefs have been basic in the development of the sequence and variety of course experiences which form the program.

Students in this program complete 22 semester hours of work in reading and related courses in addition to the general education and elementary education courses required by the institution. This sequence begins with an introductory 5 semester hour course, Reading and Language Arts. This course includes objectives in language development and school language arts programs, including evaluation, readiness and pre-school development, beginning reading and development of skills in reading, listening, speaking, creative and expository writing, handwriting and spelling.

In relation to this course work, students observe and participate under supervision in public school classrooms for 18-20 hours during the semester.

The next required courses in the undergraduate sequence for Remedial Reading majors are the corequisites Remedial Reading and Experience in Reading: Tutoring. In these courses the students receive instruction in basic diagnosis and remedial

teaching procedures and simultaneously teach a child who has been referred to the UNI Reading Center for one hour daily over the full semester. The Reading Center is equipped with instructional rooms which are personalized for each child; a workroom and reading library of instructional and professional materials used by students for preparation of instructional materials; a children's reading room equipped with children's books and furniture; a film projection room; seminar rooms; and offices for staff and graduate assistants.

Supervisors observe students at least once each week and hold weekly individual conferences. At the end of the semester reports are sent to parents and schools.

Following the experience in Remedial Reading, reading majors take the course Diagnosis of Reading Problems. This 2 semester hour course provides advanced instruction and practice in identifying reading needs and appropriate instructional programs. This course includes standard experiences in diagnosis using audio and video tapes, diagnostic experiences with children, and writing diagnostic reports.

The final course in the required sequence is Field Experience in Reading. In this 4 semester hour course the student works in a public school special reading classroom for a half-day over an 8-week period. This supervised experience is carried out by all reading majors in addition to the 8-week student teaching experience. At least 100 children per year from the metropolitan area gain assistance in reading from the clinic and field experiences in this program.

In addition to this sequence of courses, the remedial reading majors are required to take course work in the Structure of English, Creative Dramatics, and two elective courses from the following: Language Development in the Elementary School, Issues and Trends in Elementary Reading, Teaching Expressive Language Arts, Reading in Content Areas, Reading for Adolescents, and Diagnostic Teaching of Reading.

Students who complete this program are required to exhibit the ability to:

1. Evaluate a child's developmental level of language and reading skill.
2. Identify children in need of special reading assistance.
3. Assess an individual child's reading needs.
4. Select or prepare learning materials and environments appropriate for learning needs in individual and group settings.
5. Successfully carry out instruction to meet individual reading needs in the individual, small group, and total classroom setting.
6. Assist other school personnel in reading program development.
7. Assist classroom teachers in differentiating instruction.
8. Interpret reading programs to parents.

There are several indications that the reading program at UNI has made a major impact on the preparation of elementary teachers. Administrators have become familiar with our graduates and actively seek them for positions as classroom teachers and special reading teachers. Whereas the ability of regular elementary education graduates to find desirable positions has fallen drastically in the last few years, the reading students continue to experience virtually 100 percent placement after graduation.

The number of students selecting the remedial reading major is rapidly increasing. Last year 40 students graduated with that major. The number will increase to 50 this year, and now there are over 160 students registered as remedial reading majors.

This undergraduate program was developed to increase the skills of classroom teachers as they worked with children in the reading and content classrooms. Increasingly, graduates from this program have been placed directly into positions as special reading teachers. One-half of the remedial reading graduates in 1975 were placed in such positions. It must be assumed that this program is helping teachers meet demands more successfully than other programs.

The Division of Reading includes five full-time staff members and three who share their time with the Elementary Education Division. The development of this

program is especially due to the dedication and perseverance of Dr. Julia Sparrow who began the program several years ago by contributing exceptional time, effort, and inspiration to provide adequate experiences, supplies, and facilities for students in the reading classes. Her efforts led to the cumulative addition of staff to cover secondary reading, language arts, and professional clinical services. These efforts eventually resulted in the new clinical facility and have led to the enviable reputation in the development of reading teachers now enjoyed by UNI. Dr. Sparrow has received citations for outstanding contributions to reading from the Iowa Council of the International Reading Association and the Blackhawk County Council of IRA. A Reading Scholarship has been established in her name by alumni and friends of the University.

Dr. Max Hosier, responsible for work in Reading and Language Arts and Research, has published extensively, offering classroom teachers practical suggestions for developing language and reading skills in classroom environments of high motivation and interest.

Dr. Jeanne Harms brings expertise in the development of language and thought in the child, the use of literature in language development, and the creative use of reading and expressive language.

Dr. Michael Lahey is now Director of the Reading Center and brings an interdisciplinary concern to the program. Mrs. Catherine Hatcher, now completing her doctoral program, offers special skills in helping students select appropriate evaluation procedures for individual children.

Dr. Ned Ratekin, Director of the Reading Division, provides instruction in the nature of the reading process and programs for secondary and mature readers.

This staff is supported by professional clinical assistants in the Reading Center and elementary education professors who teach selected reading courses.

The total cost for personnel and operation of the programs in reading is approximately $130,000 a year. The Division of Reading has been awarded $70,000

from the Right To Read Effort to develop materials for teacher preparation in reading. That work is now proceeding and will be completed for dissemination in the summer of 1976.

Several evaluation procedures have been carried out recently. In the Spring of 1975 all graduates of the elementary education program in the previous three years were sent a questionnaire identifying strengths and weaknesses in their preparation to teach reading. The Reading Division has met in special sessions with the UNI student teaching coordinators to discover particular problems students face and skills needed as they carry out their student teaching assignments. In the 1974-75 school year meetings were held with Reading and Language Arts "specialists" from local and state education agencies to discover special needs in the training of reading teachers. This year the Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading, developed by A. Steryl Artley and Veralee Hardin, will be administered to students in the Reading and Language Arts classes.

Information from all these sources have contributed to identification of specific competencies to be developed through the reading courses, and refinement of course content and methodology is a constant activity.

The Division of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at UNI believes it truly has an exemplary program in the preparation of teachers in the area of reading.

Ned Ratekin

Ned Ratekin, Director
Division of Reading

Howard Knutson

Howard Knutson, Dean
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AACTE Chief Institutional Representative